

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

Please amend claims 3, 8, 9 and 18. A complete listing of the claims, including their current status, is provided below.

1-2. (Cancelled)

3. (Currently Amended) A method of screening for an anti-viral agent, comprising ~~for a nucleic acid capable of inhibiting translation of a nucleic acid sequence containing IRES wherein said nucleic acid sequence is from a Hepatitis A virus, said method comprising the step of administering to an organism said nucleic acid encoding a sequence that is complementary to at least a portion of said IRES, wherein the ability of said nucleic acid to inhibit translation of said viral nucleic acid sequence is detected by:~~

- (a) ~~contacting said nucleic acid~~ a test agent ~~with a~~ an RNA comprising a Hepatitis A virus IRES operably linked to a reporter-encoding sequence ~~reporter construct having the following elements operably linked: a replication origin, a promoter, a reporter gene, and said IRES, under conditions where said reporter gene is translated;~~ and,
- (b) ~~measuring~~ assessing the activity ~~level of the translation product of said reporter gene;~~ and
- (c) ~~comparing said level of said translation product in (b) to the level of translation product synthesized by the said reporter gene construct under the conditions of (a) but in the absence of said nucleic acid, thereby detecting said nucleic acid capable of inhibiting translation of said nucleic acid sequence.~~

wherein a reduction in activity of said reporter in the presence of said agent as compared to in the absence of said agent indicates that said agent is an antiviral agent.

4-7. (Cancelled)

8. **(Currently Amended)** The method of claim 3, wherein ~~said test agent nucleic acid~~ said test agent ~~nucleic acid~~ fragment complementary to at least a portion of said IRES is an oligonucleotide comprising a purine tract of about 4 to 12 nucleotides.

9. **(Currently Amended)** The method of claim 3, wherein said ~~test agent nucleic acid~~ test agent ~~nucleic acid~~ fragment complementary to at least a portion of said IRES is an oligonucleotide comprising a purine tract of about 5 to 9 nucleotides.

10. **(Previously presented)** The method of claim 9, wherein said oligonucleotide further comprises a CAT nucleotide triplet.

11-17 **(Cancelled)**

18. **(Previously presented)** A composition comprising a nucleic acid encoding a sequence that is complementary to at least a portion of a Hepatitis A virus IRES which nucleic acid contains a YX AUG sequence, wherein the nucleic acid is present in an amount effective for inhibiting viral replication, and wherein Y is a pyrimidine tract between 4 to 12 nucleotides, wherein X is a random spacer sequence of between 5 to 30 nucleotides.

19. **(New)** The method of claim 3, wherein said RNA is in a cell.